



Container Gardening Basics



Advantages to Gardening in Containers

No matter your budget, taste and gardening experience container gardening is right for you. Here are some great reasons why:

- **No Ground Necessary!** No digging or weeding, plus less pest damage.
- **Instant Garden Gratification-** Create a focal point, liven-up a static area, cover-up an eyesore, or improve an already wonderful garden display.
- **Movable and/or Changeable-** When you are bored with a plant remove it!
- **Small Space Gardens-** Great for city dwellers, patios and porches.
- **Tender or Fickle Plants-** Now grow plants that require specific environments, soils, and protection (e.g. rock garden plants prefer dry, gritty soils not clay).
- **Comfort Gardening-** Physically challenged individuals can position their containers for comfortable gardening while seated or standing.

Selecting a Container

There are thousands of containers to choose from, so consider the materials in which they are made and where you are to display them in order to select a type.

- **Materials**
 1. **Terra cotta or Glazed Ceramics-** the classic choice with a lot of new updates, low to medium pricing, roots have good air exchange due to the porosity of the clay, requires protection in harsh winter environments, but if the drainage hole is kept clear year-round they should be long lasting.
 2. **Stone or Concrete-** typically very formal looking, lasts forever and looks better as it ages, can be medium to high priced and very heavy.
 3. **Plastic or Resin-** very light pots that can be movable, low to high in price depending upon “realistic” looking qualities, can become brittle in winter. Foam resin can help insulate plants’ roots.
 4. **Wood or Baskets-** under-utilized, easy to build, can last forever depending upon craftsman ship and polyurethane protectants, fairly low to medium price except for cedar products.
 5. **Metals-** copper, galvanized steel, iron all great choices, can look contemporary to old world, may be heavy to light, and long lasting.
 6. **Recycled Materials-** old boots, sinks, tires, etc. give high garden personality at minimum cost.
- **Types**
 1. Hanging baskets or pots
 2. Wall planters or sconces
 3. Window boxes or baskets
 4. Floors planters, pots, troughs, cradles, bowls
 5. Misc. planters, tiered planters, topiary forms, pedestals, self-watering, etc.

Essentials of Container Gardening

- **Drainage/Liner-** hardware cloth, gravel, Styrofoam peanuts, coco-liners, sphagnum moss, etc...
- **Potting mix-** Petitti Potting Soil or Petitti Planting Mix for larger containers.
- **Fertilizer-** Liquid vs. solid. For easier maintenance, Angelo recommends a granular, slow-release food like Osmocote and/or Plant-tone.
- **Water-** polymers like Soil Moist help reduce watering maintenance.
- **Theme-** formal, informal, simple, eclectic, tropical, Asian, monochromatic, etc.

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Plant Selection

- **Know your site-** sun, wind, rain, snow and temperatures to be considered.
- **Do research-** go to the library, get on the web, visit our stores, and find some inspiration.
- **Flower vs. Foliage-** always remember to incorporate exciting foliage plants in your container garden to provide interest when the flowers are not in bloom like Coleus, Dichondra, Lamium, sweet potato and licorice vines.
- **Plant shape or growth habit-** consider a combination of upright plants, medium sized fillers and trailing plants “thriller (T), filler (F) & spiller (S)” to create depth and interest in the container garden.

| Plants: | Annuals/ Tropicals | Perennials | Fruits/ Vegetables | Herbs | Trees/ Shrubs |
|---------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
| Comments: | All do excellent in containers, site & habit important | Best with invasive or fickle plants; protect over winter in the garage | Most work well; try a combination of bush & trailing types | Most work well especially annual types that you can bring indoors for the winter | Best if dwarf/ miniature varieties are used; protect over winter in the garage |
| Suggestions: | Sun | Sun | Cold Crops | Annuals | Sun |
| | Alyssum F | Achillea F | Broccoli | Basil | Alberta Spruce |
| | Bacopa S | Alcea T | Brussel Sprouts | Borage | Barberry |
| | Bidens F,S | Armeria F | Cabbage | Calendula | Boxwood |
| | Cannas T | Artemisia F | Cauliflower | Chamomile | Cherry |
| | Citrus T | Bamboo T | Collards | Chevril | Crabapple |
| | Dahlia T | Campanula F,S | Endive | Cilantro | Dogwood, shrub |
| | Diascia F | Coreopsis F | Kale | Curry | Euonymus |
| | Dianthus F | Dianthus F | Kohlrabi | Dill | Forsythia |
| | Geranium T,F | Echinacea F | Lettuce | Fennel | Hinoki Cypress |
| | Heliotrope F | Gaillardia F | Radish | Hyssop | Juniper |
| | Hibiscus T | Grasses T | Spinach | Lavender, some | Lilac |
| | Lantana F,S | Geranium F | Warm Crops | Lemon Grass | Magnolia |
| | Mandevilla T | Hemerocallis F | Beans | Marjoram | Mugho Pine |
| | Nasturtium F | Iberis F,S | Beets | Parsley | Roses |
| | Nemesia F | Leucanthemum F | Blueberry | Pennyroyal | Spiraea |
| | Osteospermum F | Liatris T | Cantaloupe | Rosemary | Weigela |
| | Petunia F,S | Ligularia F,T | Carrots | Rue | Shade |
| | Pentas F | Oenothera T,S | Celery | Sage | Clethra |
| | Scaevola S | Papaver T | Corn | Salad Burnet | Daphne |
| | Salvia T | Sedum F,S | Cucumber | Savory | Dogwood, tree |
| | Vinca F | Veronica F | Figs | Scented Geranium | Fringe tree |
| | Verbena F,S | Shade | Gourds | Stevia | Holly |
| | Zinnia F | Anemone T | Honeydew | Tarragon | Hydrangea |
| | Shade | Astilbe T,F | Melons | Perennials | Japanese Maple |
| | Ageratum F | Brunnera F | Okra | Bee balm | Leucothoe |
| | Begonia F | Dicentra T,F | Onions | Catnip | Microbiota |
| | Browalia F | Epimedium F | Peppers | Chives | Mountain Laurel |
| | Caladium T | Helleborus T,F | Pumpkins | Flax | Pieris |
| | Coleus T,F | Heuchera F | Strawberries | Garlic | Rhododendron |
| | Cyclamen F | Hosta T,F | Squash, Summer | Lady’s Mantle | Viburnum |
| | Fuchsia F,S | Lamium F,S | Squash, Winter | Lavender | Boxwood |
| | Impatiens F | Liriope F,S | Swiss Chard | Mint | |
| | Lamium F,S | Myosotis F | Tomatoes | Mullein | |
| | Nicotiana F | Polygonatum T | Watermelon | Oregano | |
| | Pansy/ Viola F | Primula F | Zucchini | St. John’s Wort | |
| | Streptocarpella F | Tiarella F | | Thyme | |
| | Snapdragon T | Trycirtis T,F | | Valerian | |
| | Torenia F,S | Vinca S | | Wormwood | |